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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOXO
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Major media (banner in Ha'aretz) reported that a regional summit is scheduled to take place early next week at Sharm el-Sheikh, with the participation of PM Ehud Olmert and PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud

Abbas. Israel Radio quoted GOI sources as saying that the meeting will be held on Monday. The summit will be hosted by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and will be attended by Jordan's King Abdullah II. It aims to bolster Abbas's position and encourage dialogue with Olmert, following the Hamas takeover in the Gaza Strip and the establishment of an emergency government in Ramallah. Ha'aretz quoted a senior political source in Jerusalem as saying on Wednesday that Olmert reached an understanding with President Bush during his visit to Washington that it is necessary to support Abbas. The decision to aid Abbas was made despite skepticism in light of past experiences about his chances for success. Olmert and Bush reportedly agreed they must not allow the impression that Abbas failed because Israel or the US failed him.

Ha'aretz wrote that on his return leg from the US, Olmert told reporters that he is satisfied with his visit and noted the great opportunity in the fact with Hamas no longer in the Palestinian government. Meanwhile, for the first time since the new Palestinian government was established, senior level contacts between Israel and the Palestinian Authority took place on Wednesday. Ha'aretz reported that FM Tzipi Livni spoke Wednesday on the telephone with Salam Fayyad, the PA's Prime Minister, and discussed the implications of the Hamas takeover in the Gaza Strip. Livni stressed the importance of the establishment of the new government in the PA, saying that "it enables progress in matters that have been at an impasse during the period of the unity government and enables progress in the peace process." Ha'aretz quoted sources in Livni's office as saying that the conversation with Fayyad was coordinated with Olmert.

Major media reported that, in his first address to the Palestinian people since the Hamas takeover of Gaza, Abbas went on the offensive on Wednesday and angrily lashed out at the Islamic militants, accusing them of trying to build an empire of darkness in the Strip and pledging he would not talk to murderous terrorists. Abbas was uncharacteristically harsh in his verbal attack on Hamas. He said the group attacked national symbols, including the home of Yasser Arafat. He also hinted at the possibility of replacing the Palestinian parliament, where Hamas has a majority, with the Palestine National Council. Such a measure would be necessary since under current rules, the emergency government would require parliament's approval after a month. He said Palestinian travel documents would in the future only be issued from the West Bank and if recognized internationally, as expected would mean Gazans can no longer travel abroad. Security personnel will be deployed in force in the West Bank to restore law and order, he added. Despite the harsh setback of losing Gaza, Abbas reiterated that the time is ripe for restarting peace talks with Israel, under the umbrella of an international conference. At one point, Abbas also described in great detail what he said was a Hamas attempt to assassinate him by means of a tunnel leading to his office.

Israel Radio quoted high-ranking IDF officers as saying that there must be no negotiations or talks with Hamas, not even through international organizations, as they would only strengthen Hamas and give it recognition.

Major media (lead story in Yediot) reported that last night 60 Fatah loyalists were evacuated from the Erez Crossing to Egypt. The operation was the result of cooperation between Israel, the PA, and Egypt.

Major media reported that President Bush has talked to British PM Tony Blair about becoming the Quartet's Middle East peace envoy after he leaves office next week. The Jerusalem Post reported that, PM Olmert and other Israeli politicians expressed support for Blair continuing to play a role in efforts to bring about peace in the region.

The media reported that five Qassam rockets fired from the Gaza Strip landed on Wednesday evening in and around Sderot, lightly injuring three people. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attacks.

The Jerusalem Post quoted senior officials in the Prime Minister's Office as saying on Wednesday that the new PA government must formally announce that it has accepted the Quartet's three benchmarks before Israel transfers frozen tax revenues to the PA.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel will continue to supply gasoline, water, and power to the Gaza Strip.

Leading media quoted police as saying that Ala Hamad, a Jordanian citizen who was enlisted by Hamas operatives in Syria to carry out a terrorist attack in Israel is under arrest for allegedly planning to kidnap an Israeli in Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the American Jeffrey Seth, formerly of North Carolina, who lived in a West Bank settlement, was sentenced to two and a half years in prison on Wednesday after being convicted of trying to import weapons that police suspected he intended to use against Palestinians. Seth was arrested last year.

Maariv reported that four days ago in Cairo Raleb Majadele, the Israeli Minister of Science, Culture, and Sports, met with Lebanese Education Minister Khaled Qabbani.

Maariv quoted senior GOI sources as saying on Wednesday that Israel will not purchase natural gas from the Palestinians as long as Hamas has total control over the Gaza Strip.

Leading media reported that on Wednesday the UK's largest trade union, UNISON, advocated a total boycott of Israel over its continued occupation of Palestinian territories.

Yediot reported that private companies have recently promised 99 percent success in procuring US visas in exchange for hundreds of shekels (on Wednesday one shekel was worth 4.187 US dollars). The newspaper cited the claim of travel agents that this is a fraud. Yediot reported that the American Embassy in Tel Aviv was surprised to hear about the alleged dealings and that the visa application process involves only the Embassy and the individual applicant.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that a delegation of 14 senior law enforcement agents, including police commanders and sheriffs from across the US, will visit Israel for a week to learn how to fight terrorism. The visit was organized and paid for by the Anti-Defamation League in New York, which views visits of this type as a good opportunity for strengthening relations between Israel and the US.

Ha'aretz reported that Petrogroup, which was taken over this month by Russian-born Israeli oligarch Arkady Gaidamak, has completed the acquisition gas stations and convenience stores in Virginia and Tennessee for USD 46 million.

All media reported that the police will deploy more than 7,000 officers today in Jerusalem to protect an estimated crowd of 5,000 people expected to attend the Gay Pride Parade. Violent protests by ultra-Orthodox extremists are expected to escalate. Jerusalem's Gay and Lesbian Center organizes the parade. The Jerusalem Post quoted Noa Sattath, the head of the center, as saying that her organization receives about USD 2000,000 a year from the Jewish Federations in the US.

Mideast:

Summary:

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "[President Bush] is thinking in terms of a generation or two, of how the region will look 50 years from now. That is a bird's-eye view of the situation, but it dangerously ignores the problems of the present."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "The only problem is that the enthusiasm with which Washington and Jerusalem are leaping into this new-old approach is matched only by the consensus that it won't work."

Ha'aretz editorialized: "Now that Gaza has fallen into Hamas's hands, no effort should be spared in the attempt to salvage the West Bank from extremists. [Marwan] Barghouti as a free leader could greatly assist in achieving that."

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The Egyptians need to understand that there are no more excuses and that the burden of proof is theirs to bear now."

Deputy Managing Editor Anshel Pfeffer wrote in The Jerusalem Post: "If the US and Israel are to realize their hopes of a greater Egyptian involvement in dealing with the Hamas mini-state that has sprung up overnight in Gaza, it will only be achieved by a considerable package of incentives, or a serious threat to other interests of the Mubarak regime."

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Only heavy pressure by the residents [of the Gaza Strip], which would reach their leadership, could bring the latter to the realization that damage resulting from the continued detention of [abducted IDF Corporal Gilad] Shalit is considerably more important than its effectiveness."

Block Quotes:

I. "Between a Vision and a Mirage"

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (6/21): "We should listen to Bush attentively: His true vision is not the establishment of a Palestinian state but the establishment of the right Palestinian state. Nor has his understanding of the causes and the results of the dispute changed: It is not the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that fuels the extremists, but the extremists who are adding fuel to the conflict. And they will not stop until they are defeated -- in Iraq, in Lebanon, in Palestine, in Iran, in Syria and in Afghanistan. Bush has apparently long since stopped having gloomy thoughts about his public approval rating. He is thinking in terms of a generation or two, of how the region will look 50 years from now. That is a bird's-eye view of the situation, but it dangerously ignores the problems of the present, the daily life of the Palestinians who are fleeing to the Erez crossing, who do not have 50 years, or even 50 minutes, to wait. But they will apparently have to wait nevertheless."

II. "Missing an Opportunity"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (6/21): "There could hardly have been en more agreement between President George Bush and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert at their White House press conference.... It was hard not to notice an odd sense of relief. The previously untenable policy of trying to support the better half of a two-headed monster has suddenly been simplified. The operation may have been barbaric, but now that Hamas extremists and 'Fatah' moderates have separated, the screws can be tightened on the former and the floodgates of assistance can be opened to the latter. The only problem is that the enthusiasm with which Washington and Jerusalem are leaping into this new-old approach is matched only by the consensus that it won't work.... The fall of Gaza proves that being against Hamas should not alone qualify Fatah for massive Western support, even though Fatah -- with some justification -- is seen as no better, and perhaps worse, in Palestinian eyes."

III. "Free Barghouti"

Ha'aretz editorialized (6/21): "Modern history -- including Israel's -- has known national leaders who turned to violence and were jailed for years, until they were released to become political leaders who marched their peoples toward independence peacefully. Nelson Mandela is one such example. The leaders of the Zionist undergrounds in pre-state Israel are another. Now, the turn of Fatah/Tanzim leader Marwan Barghouti has come.... Fatah's moderate leadership is in a serious crisis. Israel's interest calls for its consolidation, albeit after outrageous delays, and no one matches Barghouti's ability to achieve that. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's promises in Washington that Israel would be willing to take 'far-reaching' measures to assist the Palestinian Authority's emergency government must be backed by immediate action. Releasing prisoners is the first step one should demand of anyone who promises

such steps.... The Prime Minister's statements must not remain empty words -- especially not now, when a practical opportunity for dialogue with a moderate Palestinian leadership has presented itself. Now that Gaza has fallen into Hamas's hands, no effort should be spared in the attempt to salvage the West Bank from extremists. Barghouti as a free leader could greatly assist in achieving that."

IV. "Let the Egyptians In"

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (6/21): "The Gaza Strip today is like a large water container with two narrow openings on either side, each of which is stopped up with a finger; the water aspires to burst out. On the one side Israel is stopping the flow and on the other side Egypt is.

This is a battle of attrition, the results of which are of historic proportions. The first to give in and pull his finger out, even cursorily, will find himself flooded eventually with the entire amount of the water. Neither Egypt nor Israel want responsibility for the Gaza Strip and that is why both have sealed their border. The first one to give in -- Gaza will be theirs. A gift.... As long as Fatah partially controlled the Gaza Strip, the Egyptians consoled themselves with the fiction that it would be best were the Palestinians to administer Gaza themselves and not Egypt. At least

that is what they led people to believe. That is probably why they downplayed the importance of the arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip.

They perceived themselves as mediators at most, and reduced their real influence to the minimum possible. That fiction no longer exists. The Egyptians should have no doubt that the terrorist regime in Gaza will radiate outward into the Sinai peninsula and, finally, to Cairo itself. The Egyptians need to understand that there are no more excuses and that the burden of proof is theirs to bear now: They need to stop letting the weapons into the Gaza Strip and they need to intervene there more. Not only for Israel's sake, and I don't expect them to do that for us. But first and foremost for their own regime."

IV. "Calling Egypt's Bluff in Gaza"

Deputy Managing Editor Anshel Pfeffer wrote in The Jerusalem Post (6/21): "At their summit in Sharm e-Sheikh in January, Mubarak said in Ehud Olmert's presence that the Egyptian efforts against the smuggling are sufficient. The small group of Egyptian officers acting as advisers within Gaza were all withdrawn when the current round of internecine bloodshed began. The policy remains not to risk even one Egyptian for the Palestinians' sake. If the US and Israel are to realize their hopes of a greater Egyptian involvement in dealing with the Hamas mini-state that has sprung up overnight in Gaza, it will only be achieved by a considerable package of incentives, or a serious threat to other interests of the Mubarak regime."

VI. "Yes, Collective Punishment"

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in the popular, pluralist Maariv (6/21): "The absurd situation is that Abu Mazen and his government can possibly afford to totally disconnect from Hamas, but at this stage Israel cannot afford that luxury.... Israel must talk to the residents [of the Gaza Strip] above the head of their government, and clarify to them that the key to some relief in their condition lies in an insignificant gesture that they must make. Only heavy pressure by the residents, which would reach their leadership, could bring the latter to the realization that the damage caused by the continued detention of [abducted IDF Corporal Gilad] Shalit is considerably more important than its effectiveness.... [Hamas] may then return to negotiating a prisoner-exchange deal with Israel and somewhat soften their claims."

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